



Technical Bulletin

Clarification on Throat Cultures

TO: Medical Staff and Clients

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SUBJECT: Routine and Special Circumstance use of Throat Culture

The primary test for *Streptococcus pyogenes* group A (GAS) testing is by NAAT (PCR) – order code 5824. Screening patients for GAS is intended to identify and treat infected patients who are at risk for serious sequelae such as rheumatic fever, and NOT the pharyngitis because antibiotics do NOT decrease the longevity or severity of bacterial pharyngitis.¹ For cases of suspected bacterial pharyngitis caused by other beta hemolytic streptococci such as group C & G or *Arcanobacterium haemolyticum* we offer routine throat culture (616).

We do NOT screen for other potential pathogens such as *Haemophilus influenzae*, *Fusobacterium necrophorum*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Candida* species, or *Moraxella catarrhalis* because they are often part of the normal upper respiratory flora and are NOT typically associated with pharyngitis. Furthermore, we do NOT routinely screen for special circumstance pathogens such as extragenital *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, *Neisseria meningitidis* colonization investigation, or unvaccinated diphtheria (*Corynebacterium diphtheriae*) unless we are alerted to this possibility.

For special circumstance or complicated throat infections (e.g., epiglottitis, peritonsillar abscess, oral thrush, Lemierre's syndrome) please provide additional clinical information and/or target organisms on the requisition so that we can use special media and/or methods to more aggressively evaluate the cultures.

In addition to publishing this bulletin, we have incorporated additional ordering guidance in our on-line submission guidelines under METHODOLOGY (<https://til.dlslab.com/physicians/test-directory-view-test/?test=6160>).

Order codes: 5824 Strep A by Nucleic Acid Test
616 Throat culture (group C & G beta hemolytic streptococci or *A. haemolyticum*)
625 Extragenital culture for *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*
5681 Culture for *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*

Reference:

¹Shulman et al. 2012 IDSA Guidelines. CID:55

Please refer any questions to Terrie Koyamatsu, Manager - DLS Microbiology Laboratory at 589-5196, or DLS Client Services at 589-5101.

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